

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 8-12 and 14-18 are pending. Claim 13 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 10 and 15 are amended. Claims 8 and 12 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment reduces the issues on appeal by placing claim 15 in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and by canceling claim 13. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicants did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that:

Claim 15 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph; and claims 8-12, 14, and 16-18 are allowed.

The Applicants appreciate the Examiner's early indication of allowable subject matter. As indicated below, claim 15 is rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Therefore, claim 15 is in condition for allowance.

Claim Objections

The Examiner has objected to claim 13 for failing to further limit the subject matter of the previous claim. In order to overcome this objection, claim 13 is canceled herein. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claim 15 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has set forth certain instances wherein the claim language fails to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicants regard as the invention.

In order to overcome this rejection, claim 15 is amended, thus correcting each of the deficiencies specifically pointed out by the Examiner. Applicants respectfully submit that

the claims, as set forth in this amendment, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention.

Therefore, claim 15 is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph are respectfully requested.

All claims of this application are now in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

Applicationl No. 09/431,049
Amendment dated August 24, 2004
Reply to Office Action dated May 24, 2004

Docket No. 2095-0104P
Group Art Unit 2176
Page 10 of 10

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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